

## Star Wars

### Wizard's RPG Stories

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#### False Horizon

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If you have yet to play the Living Force "Night Eyes" trilogy, we recommend you read no further. This article contains story elements that may spoil the plot of those three modules.

The citizens of Cularin have become increasingly aware over the past year and a half of the presence of the Cularin Militia. This ever-growing body, under the leadership of Osten Dal'Nay and Broof Yurdel, has received funding from anonymous sources, has managed to procure ships, uniforms, weapons, and personnel, and has become a meaningful social and political force in Cularin - all without official government sanction.

Recently, the Militia grew quiet. It didn't disappear, but merely receded into the background. To all appearances, funding had been cut, or the Militia had been the victim of some sort of plot to keep it from operating at its fullest potential. Earlier this morning, however, the truth behind the Militia's inactivity was revealed. Commanders Dal'Nay and Yurdel appeared together in a holo-transmission viewed across the system. In this transmission, they revealed that what might have been taken for quiescence had, in fact, been planning - - planning for a most amazing event.

The screen flickers. Two faces come into focus, then we pull back and see two individuals standing at the edge of one of Cularin's jungles. One of the individuals is a Human male, the other a Gungan male. Both wear the distinctive livery of the Cularin Militia. After a few seconds, the names "Osten Dal'Nay" and "Broof Yurdel" appear below the appropriate individual. In the distance, we hear blaster fire.

Osten: People of Cularin, the time for action is at hand. One hour ago, Militia strike teams seized control of Thaereian bases throughout Cularin.

Broof: Wesa still doin' da fightin'. Mya ground troops, deysa takin' losses, but wesa pushin' da bombad Daereians out of Cularin, or wesa dyin' in da tryin'.

Osten: Ship-to-ship engagement has been minimal. Thaereian transports have been seized, and a number of fighter bases have been neutralized. So far, we have no confirmed civilian casualties, though we do not expect to continue to be so lucky. Any Militia member who has not so far taken part in these raids should consider him - or herself activated as of this moment. Please report to the nearest Militia station for briefing and equipping.

Evidence recently surfaced that Thaere has been plotting against Cularin and has been moving to control traffic into and out of Cularin for some time. It remains unclear to what extent they have succeeded, but there can be little doubt - - they are working with the Separatists and are cutting Cularin off from the remainder of the galaxy as thoroughly as possible. We could not wait any longer to launch Operation False Horizon.

More explosions in the background.

Broof: Wesa askin' all da peoples of Cularin - - don't be helpin' bombad Daere. Protectin' da families and keepin' Cularin safe, helpin' da Militia, dat's good. Mesa dink, wesa needin' help from alla da peoples of Cularin b'fore dis bein' done.

Both Osten and Broof nod off-camera, and the image fades. It's replaced by Yara Grugara, seated at the "Eye on Cularin" news desk. She is only partially made up and looks very grim.

Yara: Am I on?

Friends, this is Yara Grugara. As some of us have feared, it appears that the military of Thaere did not, in fact, have Cularin's best interests at heart. The strike by the Cularin Militia - - what sources are calling Operation False Horizon - - was launched shortly after dawn, Cularin local time. Initial reports are sketchy, but we can gather this much: Thaereian bases around the system have been seized or put under siege. Most of the Thaereian troops on Cularin proper have withdrawn into Soboll, where it appears they have established a perimeter that includes layered security, multiple levels of shielding, and substantial personnel resources.

I've been told that we have a transmission coming in, a brief statement from the Master of the Jedi Academy on Almas, Lanius Qel-Bertuk. We take you now to that statement.

Master Lanius appears. He has dark circles under his eyes and looks determined.

Lanius: The actions of the Cularin Militia were undertaken with the full knowledge and consent of the Jedi on Almas. It has become clear to us that Thaere represents a threat to the well-being of the system. I will not speculate on the extent to which a relationship may exist between Thaere and the Believers, though others may. Instead, let me be blunt.

The reason the Jedi support this endeavor is that yesterday, attempts to contact Coruscant were blocked. We had known our communications with the Jedi Council were being monitored for some time, and we had narrowed our search for those responsible to a handful of locations. The full disruption of communication, however, left no doubt as to the likely next step.

Having been apprised of the Militia's activities over recent months by Commander Dal'Nay, we contacted him and encouraged him to move forward. It was with the heaviest of hearts that I did this. I, as with most Jedi, would not bring war to a place that had thus far been spared its tragedies. Until Thaere behaved in a manner that allowed no question of its intentions, I could not bring myself to support a course of action that would lead to the deaths of

innocents. It may be that I waited too long, or not long enough. I will say only that I followed my best judgment. This is all any of us can do.

When the initial surge is over and the fronts where combat will take place are established, Jedi from Almas will be among those who fight for Cularin. Some of our number are already with the Militia members seeking to secure Thaereian bases in the system.

We will do all we can to see that peace is restored to Cularin. On that, you have my word. May the Force be with us all.

Lanius fades, and we again see Yara seated behind the news desk. She is now closer to three-quarters made up, and someone has applied enough makeup around her eyes to get rid of the dark circles. She shooshes someone off-camera.

Yara: While Master Lanius was speaking, three executives with Cularin Central Broadcasting were taken into custody under suspicion of conspiracy. Yara might be tempted, if she were less professional than she is, to note that these three individuals -- who will remain nameless, for the time being --

Three names scroll across the bottom of the screen.

-- are the same individuals who forced her to retract her statements last year about the capitol ships hidden in Genarius, and who encouraged her to stir up trouble at recent rallies. So, while formal charges have yet to be filed, the three nameless executives with Cularin Central Broadcasting --

The three names scroll across the bottom of the screen again, along with home addresses and comlink numbers.

û are, in the opinion of some in our offices, likely to have questionable associations and ties to the Thaereian power structure.

The three names scroll across the screen one final time, followed by the words, "Treason is unacceptable and should be dealt with in the most thorough manner possible."

I've just been informed that our offices have received a holorecording of Senator Wren, delivered by a member of the Cularin Militia. Our producers are currently -- yes? I'm being told that the recording has been reviewed, and that it's going to air as soon as --

Yara and the Cularin Central Broadcasting set disappear. We see Senator Lavina Wren seated at a desk. The wall behind her is a flickering holographic image of the Galactic Senate chamber, complete with floating platforms that move back and forth from positions on the walls. Senator Wren is impeccably attired and looks every bit the professional politician. She folds her hands, takes a deep breath, and begins.

Senator Wren: Citizens of Cularin. When you elected me to represent you in the Galactic Senate, little could prepare me for what lay ahead. I've done my best to pilot our little ship through dangerous sectors, watching as the galaxy appeared to crumble around us. I lost you all, for a time. Then you came back to me, and the galaxy was a very different place than what you knew.

If you are viewing this recording, then I am on Coruscant, and you are at war. Know that I will do everything in my power to assist in bringing this war to a swift end. Know also that I cannot be certain how far my power extends. War may have come to Cularin, but Cularin is in a unique position to defend itself, and the Clone Wars are being fought on hundreds of fronts.

I have long suspected that the Thaereians worked with the Separatists, but for reasons I cannot detail to you, I could do nothing about it. Please believe me when I say that if I had believed I could do anything to stop them, I would have. It has only been in recent weeks that my hands have become (at last) unbound, and I have worked closely with the Militia in that time to put into place the necessary elements for Cularin to defend herself.

We are one small ship in a wide galaxy, and our problems are neither more nor less important, in the eyes of the Senate, than those of dozens of other ships that also find themselves adrift during this difficult time. I will not lie to you and claim that we should expect clone armies to make their way to Cularin in our defense. The presence of a Jedi academy and a growing militia makes it difficult to request troops when so many systems lack even a single Jedi or any kind of organized military. Still, I will not cease trying. I could no more stop trying to protect my home, my beloved Cularin, than any of you.

The fight will not be easy. Many will die, on both sides. Thaere is governed by cruel leaders who care nothing for the individual and everything for their own well-being. They have so far spared no expense to sow chaos and fear, and I do not expect them to suddenly become kind and benevolent. The apparent kindness, the feigned benevolence - - it has all been a smokescreen from the beginning, and the sooner they are beaten back and Cularin's independence restored, the better for all of us. We have not been free - - truly free - - since Cularin became a protectorate of Thaere, itself a puppet for the Separatist movement. We deserve freedom, for ourselves and for the galaxy. This is what is right, and if we must fight for our freedom, so be it.

Know that I am with you in spirit, if not in body. Know that as you fight Thaereians in the streets and skies of Cularin, I am waging my own war. May the Force be with Cularin.

The transmission ends. For a few seconds the screen is blank. Then we hear voices, somewhat frantic, and the video feed begins once more. Yara has changed clothes and her makeup is complete. She looks to her right before speaking.

Yara: Strong words. Other news just in: Thaereian fighters have engaged Militia fighters just inside the asteroid belt. Initial reports indicated that the Thaereian ships outnumbered Cularin's ships almost three to one. Cularin Central Broadcasting satellites just inside the Belt obtained the following video. I must warn you: What you are about to see is undoctored, and some viewers may find the images disturbing.

Cut to a space battle. Z-95 Headhunters with green-and-white Cularin Militia insignias on their wings dodge and weave through a cloud of fighters - some Headhunters, some other models - bearing the markings of the Thaereian Navy. The odds look much worse than three to one, and as we watch, several

ships explode. At least two of the ships were definitely Militia vessels, and two more could have been. The fight isn't going well for the outnumbered Militia fighters.

Then a haze appears in the background, and from behind the battlefield, several dozen fighters emerge, followed by a large freighter with multiple quad-lasers. The newcomers tear into the battle, and Thaereian ships begin to explode right and left. The fight lasts less than a minute before the Thaereian ships that remain retreat into the asteroid belt, the newcomers giving chase. Several of the recent arrivals zip past the satellite that's been recording the action, and we see that they all bear an identical marking on their wings. Superimposed on an image of Cularin, in green and white, is a stylized letter "N."